2: Stefansson--22 (1908-12) 1914 Copper Eskimo
116, 135

"It is of great significance to the people of this district that native copper is found in many places. I have known of a piece of copper float as large as a house-building brick picked up on the north shore of McTavish Bay, Great Bear Lake, and from here north copper is known to occur either in the form of float along the stream courses or native copper outcrop from the hillside all the way north to at least forty miles north of Prince Albert Sound in Victoria Island a distance of over three hundred miles. The western limit of copper deposits known to us is in the vicinity of Dismal Lake, while to the east it extends at least to the east shore of Bathurst Inlet."

3: Rasmussen--71-72 (c. 1923) 1932 Copper Eskimo
116, 101, 135, 316, 328

"Wh[illegible] dealing with the various tribal groups I have already referred to what it was that drove the particularly enterprising out on [72] trading journeys, and what articles of barter could be offered for those one lacked. The whole of the region we have just described had a great and valuable source of wealth in the occurrence of pure copper, both in Bathurst Inlet and some places on Victoria Land, especially on Prince Albert Sound. Of this copper the natives made knives, ulos, ice-picks and harpoon heads, which were highly prized by tribes further away. Diamond Jenness has justly included all these people under the name of The Copper Eskimos."

"Deposits of copper in the Coronation gulf district of northwestern Canada were first reported in 1766, when Moses Horton, the Hudson's Bay Company's governor at Fort Prince of Wales on Hudson bay, obtained specimens of this metal from Indians living on the northwest coast of the bay, who had received it from natives farther west, together with the information that there were deposits on a large river in their country. Horton, hoping that the metal could be commercialized, commissioned Samuel Hearne, a young Englishman, to explore the district in which the copper had been discovered, for the purpose of determining whether the locality could be reached by ships from [6] Hudson bay, and if the copper existed in sufficient quantities to pay the company to mine and to ship it to England. (1)

After two unsuccessful attempts, Hearne finally, with much difficulty and almost endless hardship, reached the shore of the river where the deposits were reported. Although he was not a geologist, he verified the statements of the Indians, but proved that the district where the copper occurred was too remote and difficult of access to permit profitable mining, even if ore should be found in abundance. Hearne surveyed the river and named it the Coppermine. While thus employed, the northern Indians who

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"1. See Hearne, Samuel, Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean, London, 1795."

had accompanied him discovered and massacred a small party of Eskimo camped on the shore of the stream. These natives were undoubtedly the forefathers of the people who are now called the Copper Eskimo, or Kidnelik (Qidneliq). Hearne reported that native copper was used extensively by them in making utensils and weapons, and brought back a few specimens of their handiwork to Fort Prince of Wales, [7] whence they were shipped to England and all trace of them lost."

11: Stefansson--293-294 (1908-1912) 1913 Copper Eskimo
116, 135, 511, 412

"Honesty seems on a higher level among...[JMR: i. e. the Prince Albert Sound people] than among any other people we have seen except the Akuliakattagmiut and Haneragmiut. Their clothes are far the best, their tents the largest. They use far more copper than any other people--doubtless because it is more abundant [in their country]. [294] The Kogluktogmiut [of the Coppermine River] are very eager for metal rods for the middle piece of the seal spear. They never make any of copper, no doubt because copper is too scarce. Their ice picks are small: their seal hole feelers are all of horn or iron. In the Sound [on the other hand] the copper ice picks are in some cases three-quarters by one and a quarter inch and fifteen inches long. Most seal spears have middle pieces of copper--the rest have iron [from M'Clure's ship?]. The seal hole feelers are most [of them] of copper. Some of their tent sticks are of local driftwood, some are round young spruce which they get from the Puiblirmiut who get them from our neighbors of last August. Some sleds come from Dease River; some from Cape Bexley, but in either case they have been bought of the Puiplirgmiut or the Haneragmiut. Their stone pots are said to be all from the Urkusiksialik or Kogluktualuk (Tree River). Some they got from the Puiplirgmiut by the road Natkusiak and I came last week, some around the point [Cape Baring] from the Haneragmiut by the road we are taking now. Their fire stones [iron pyrite for striking fire] are some from the Haneragmiut, some picked up in the mountains north of the Sound. The copper is all from the mountains northest of

the bottom of the Sound. They say some [detached] pieces of pure copper [in those mountains] are as high as a man's shoulder and as wide as high; others project out of the hill-side and are of unknown size."

412 Two incidents that came directly under my notice in the summer of 1915
322 were fairly typical. A native with whom I was travelling in southwest Victoria Island discovered on the beach a long, nail-studded plank that had presumably fallen overboard from some vessel. He carried it several miles inland to our camp, and there spent half a day splitting it into poles for fish-spear handles, two of which he sold to a kinsman. A few days later another native found a second plank, which he proposed to convert into a sled-runner, and with this purpose in view trimmed it slightly with his hunting knife. After consulting his companions, however, he decided that a new sled-runner was not needed, so he turned the [239] plank over to his stepfather to fashion into tent-poles. In each case the native split the plank with a crude antler wedge driven home by a boulder.

322 The uses of wood were naturally manifold. From it were made the sled,
[302] the tent-poles, the frame of the kayak, the snow shovel, the table, food trays,
824 and other articles too numerous to mention. Odd chips of wood sometimes
513 served as fuel during the summer months, although the Eskimo preferred heather or willow twigs. Willow twigs had a special use; sewn together in a long strip they provided a mattress to protect the bedskins from the snow.

STONE

333 Stone (apart from native copper) played an astonishingly small rôle in the
[342] economy of the Copper Eskimo. Their winter home was invariably the snow-hut, although their predecessors in the region had dwelt in huts of snow or wood, whose ruins could still be traced in numerous places along the coast. Loose stone boulders held down the edges of the Copper Eskimo tents; pillars of stone (in many cases flat slabs of dolomite easily piled one on top of another) supported kayaks, sleds, and other goods that were temporarily abandoned during the summer months; and heaped-up boulders protected caches of meat or clothes from the ravages of foxes, wolves, and birds; but any real construction in stone was conspicuously lacking. There were no stone knives or adzes,
324 no arrow heads tipped with stone, no stone sinkers for fishing lines or nets, and
412 no stone scrapers for use on wood or hides, although implements of all these types had been used by the earlier inhabitants and were sometimes gathered as curiosities by the Copper Eskimo themselves. There were stone hammers and whetstones, it is true, but these were merely unshaped pebbles picked up when [415] the need arose and afterwards discarded. In short, stone provided the material [354] for two objects only, the lamp and the cooking pot; and the stone cooking pot [779] was discarded soon after our visit in favour of iron vessels brought in from the outside.

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Figure 1. Lamp of native copper. IV.D.1441. 1/1.

324 These two vessels, the lamp and the cooking pot, were invariably made from
415 soapstone (talc chlorite schist), originally with copper-bladed adzes, but in our
354 time with adzes of iron. Freshly quarried soapstone readily scratches with the
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[135]

28: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1946
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

fingernail, so that the labour of manufacturing even a large vessel was comparatively slight, never requiring more than a few days. We saw no pots made of any other material, but from Prince Albert Sound we obtained two lamps, one fashioned from a red sandstone, the other from an igneous rock, that could hardly have been hollowed out with adzes in the ordinary way, but must have been shaped by some pecking and grinding process. Their owners knew nothing about their manufacture, and there is good reason to believe that they were not made by the Copper Eskimo, but came in from Hudson Bay.[1]

As stated in the introduction, the natives considered their amygdaloidal copper,[2] which took the place of stone, bone, or ivory in so many of their implements, as merely a peculiar stone that they could work into shape, cold, by hammering with boulders and pebbles (Figure 1). Whether they were able to drill copper before they obtained iron is uncertain; if so, they must have used stone- or copper-pointed drills. In our time they still retained one or two of these copper-pointed drills, but used them, so far as we observed, only on bone, antler, and wood.

The only important mineral besides copper was iron pyrites, which the Eskimo gathered mainly in the beds of two streams, Kugaluk River in the southwest of Victoria Island and a creek a few miles east of Coppermine River. There were other sources, however, that I failed to record. This mineral served the natives instead of flint and steel for striking fire. They possessed also a few fragments of galena (Figure 2) and litharge, which they used for marking skin and wood; the galena came mostly from Galena Point in Bathurst Inlet, but the source, or sources, of the litharge is not known.

Figure 2. Lump of galena, used for marking skins. IV.D.396. 1/1.

BONE, ANTLER, HORN, IVORY

The caribou and the musk-ox supplied nearly all the bone that the Copper Eskimo required, although for shoeing the runners of their sleds they used rib bones from occasional whales that drifted up on their shores. There was hardly a bone in the two land animals that could not be turned to some purpose. Leg bones were in special demand for skin stretchers, for needle-cases, and for sheathing the wooden ends of harpoon shafts; another type of skin stretcher was fashioned from a caribou or musk-ox shoulder blade. The ribs served for handles of various kinds, for small toggles, pins, and bows for the drilling set. Other toggles were made from the breast or pelvic bones, and the astragalus provided a ready-made mouthpiece for the drill.

The caribou alone provided antler, which was just as useful as bone, and interchangeable with that material for most purposes. On the other hand, ivory, which Eskimo elsewhere often substituted for bone and antler, was extremely rare, because neither the narwhal nor the walrus frequents the waters adjacent to the Copper Eskimo territory; consequently, the few ivory objects we saw among the natives almost certainly reached them by trade from the east or the west. Sheep likewise were absent, so that all the horn in use came from the musk-ox. This horn sometimes took the place of bone or antler, but it was especially prized for the manufacture of ladles, scoops, drinking horns, toggles for the sled, and hammers for pounding blubber.

Originally the Copper Eskimo used only four tools, all with copper blades, for shaping bone, antler, and horn, viz., the adze, the whittling knife, the grooving

[1] See p. 66.

[2] For the sources of this copper see Reports of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, vol. XII, pt. A, p. 30; vol. XI, pt. A, p. 53 et seq.

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524 Lamps only 2 or 3 inches long were children's toys, often made by themselves while their parents were manufacturing larger vessels. The Copper
354 Eskimo placed on the graves of females these minature lamps, or else genuine
764 vessels of small size, simply because they valued their larger lamps too highly
[435] to throw them away, and believed that the dead person could enlarge a miniature
to suit its needs. Frequently, perhaps generally, they recovered useful lamps
that had been deposited on the graves of relatives a few years earlier. Very
[135] rarely did they make a lamp, even a miniature one, for mortuary purposes only;
and when they did, it was nearly always a wooden model, because soapstone
was procurable only in one or two districts.

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824
415
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Figure 48. Bag for grass or eriophorum seeds, made from loon's foot. IV.D.324. 1/1.

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252 Most of the cooking was done on lamps not less than 24 inches long. Lamps
smaller than this, even down to 5 and 6 inches, served for short journeys, but
were not intended primarily for that purpose any more than to be deposited on
graves. Rather they were used to dry extra clothes, to give additional light for
sewing or working, or to enable a little girl to play at housekeeping in a corner
of the hut. Two small lamps laid side by side sometimes took the place of one
[324] large lamp for cooking. When these smaller specimens were made of soapstone
the shapes were the same, and the workmanship as careful, as in the larger ones.
354 Frequently, however, a family was content to use a water-worn pebble with a
saucer-shaped depression, or a naturally hollow slab of limestone or dolomite.

If we exclude the makeshift lamps last mentioned there was really only one
kind among the Copper Eskimo, the regular house lamp, of which the smaller
specimens, when not mere toys, were generally used for light alone, the larger
324 for both light and heat. Nearly all were made of talc chlorite schist, a soap-
354 stone that is soft, of even texture, easily worked with stone or copper tools, and
not liable to crack and break under the low heat of the burning blubber.[1]

[1] In their spring tents the Eskimo sometimes rested the lamp directly on two snow blocks and kept them lighted for a considerable time without other effect than the gradual melting of the snow.

I know of only one source for this material that is used at the present time by the Copper Eskimo, Port Epworth at the mouth of Tree River in Coronation Gulf where the talc chlorite schist occurs as an inclusion in the granite. It is very coarse in texture, and of a pale grey colour, as can be seen in unused specimens or by fracturing an old one.

Nevertheless, there seem once to have been other sources. An old woman who lived at the east end of Coronation Gulf told me that long ago her people used to make lamps and pots from stone obtained in a quarry on Rae River. An early explorer, John Rae, did find soapstone at the fall 10 miles from the mouth of this river,[1] but only in thin beds, which might explain why the Eskimo ceased to use this source. Then again, I purchased from a Coronation Gulf native a little toy lamp of typical Copper Eskimo shape (Figure 50), which was certainly not made from the Port Epworth soapstone, for it is much finer in texture and of a pale green colour. In the same region I obtained also an unfinished implement, resembling an imitation lance-head, which was made from a very similar soapstone, but is yellowish green. Finally, from the west coast of Hudson Bay, probably from Chesterfield Inlet, the museum has a toy lamp (IV.C.165) that resembles in colour, texture, and graining the green toy lamp bought in Coronation Gulf; in shape and dimensions the two are practically identical except that the Hudson Bay specimen has no shelf. Morley E. Wilson, of the Geological Survey, Canada, expressed the opinion that these lamps almost certainly came from the same quarry, because this type of soapstone is exceedingly rare in Canada, and that the implement like a lance-head was also derived from the same locality. It is worth noting that there are deposits of soapstone near the mouth of Back River.

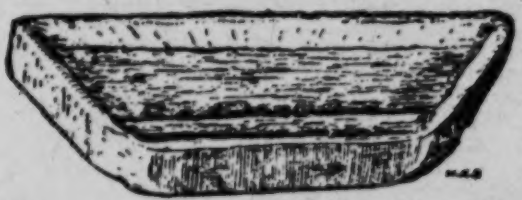

Figure 50. Toy lamp, of pale green soapstone. IV.D.612. 1/1.

Up to a few years ago natives from Dolphin and Union Strait in the west to Amundsen Gulf in the east often migrated to the Port Epworth quarry in the spring of the year in order to manufacture their own lamps and pots. Each family usually made more vessels than it required for its own use in order to have some for barter when it returned home the following autumn or winter.

Women and children often fashioned the smaller lamps and pots. The larger ones were the work of the men, although once they were finished and handed over to the housewife they became her exclusive property. No special skill was required; children 10 years of age could make small lamps just as good as those made by their elders. A little more care was necessary in working at a pot, because the rock, though soft, was somewhat brittle, and the walls and bottom had to be comparatively thin; but even this was not beyond the ability of a child, as it required patience rather than technical skill. With his crude copper tools a native could quarry out his block and make the largest lamp that was ever used in about 3 days, and the largest pot in no more than a day longer; iron tools, of course, appreciably lessened the time. First, he chiselled

[1] Richardson, Sir John: Journal of a Boat Voyage through Rupert's Land, vol. I, p. 312. London, 1851

The lamp-trimmer mentioned several times above was in most cases merely a pencil of wood varying in length from 6 to 18 inches, generally flattened at one end and smoothed. Any small stick, whether of wood, bone, or antler, sufficed in an emergency; I have even seen a man use his knife. The stone (soapstone or asbestos) pencils, often employed in West Greenland and in Hudson Bay,[1] seem to have been unknown to the Copper Eskimo. Unknown, too, were the drip-stands of Alaska, Greenland, and other places. The Coronation Gulf soapstone is not porous as the Greenland soapstone is said to be[2]; and though oil might frequently drip over the edges, it never seeped through the vessel itself.

Every household employed torches for lighting extra lamps, for searching the corners of the hut, and particularly for conveying fire from one snow-hut to another. Occasionally a woman used the lamp-stick or even raw lamp-wick, but she always kept for the purpose four or five bunches of matted moss roots that she had collected and dried in the late summer (Figure 47b). Such a torch, dipped in the melted blubber, would burn several minutes, though if carried outside in windy weather it had to be shielded inside a bag or bucket. It was a common sight after a day's march to see the women carrying torches from one hut to another in order to relight their lamps; the first lamp, of course, was lighted with pyrites.

In summer, when the lamp was discarded, the Eskimo carefully extinguished their open-air fires with flat stones in order to reduce the burning wood to charcoal, which readily took a spark on some future occasion and could be kindled into a flame with the breath. In blowing the fire they did not purse their lips as we do, but curled the tongue along the lower palate into a half-cylinder that directed the breath along a narrow path. When carrying glowing coals from one tent or cooking place to another the women usually wrapped them in bunches of dry heather or *Dryas integrifolia;* where no coals were available they used the heather or dryas alone.

POTS

The Back River Eskimo commonly made their cooking pot from five flat slabs of limestone cemented together.[3] Among the Copper Eskimo we saw none of this type, only pots carved from solid slabs of soapstone. Theoretically these pots should have received two forms, one adapted for cooking over the blubber lamp in winter and the other for use over an open fire during the summer months. The pot for use with the blubber lamp should have been a long, oblong vessel, rather narrow, because the flame of the lamp was a long, narrow line; it should have been comparatively deep to hold large pieces of seal and caribou meat; and it might have had considerable dimensions and weight, as it was always carried on the sled during the winter and spring months. The pot for use over an open fire in summer should have been less narrow, and altogether smaller and lighter, because at that season all the household furniture had to be carried on the back.

In actual fact both types existed among the Copper Eskimo, but the longer, narrower form adapted for use over the blubber lamp was far more generally used, as winter conditions prevailed during 8 months of the year. The pot was nearly always rectangular in outline, though one saw occasional specimens of trapezoid form. The corners were sharp, almost at right angles, the sides slightly convex in outline and sloping inward towards the bottom, making the vessel widest and longest at the top; the convexity in the sides was occasionally marked. In large pots there was a tendency for the depth to vary inversely with the breadth, so that the narrower vessels were likewise the deepest.

[1] Powell, M.: Op. cit., p. 201. Thalbitzer, W.: The Ammassalik Eskimo; Meddelelser om Grønland, vol. XXXIX, p. 633 (Copenhagen, 1914).
[2] Birket-Smith, K.: Ethnography of Egedesminde District; Meddelelser om Grønland, vol. LXVI, p. 284 (Copenhagen, 1924).
[3] Chief Factor James Anderson's Back River Journal of 1859; Can. Field-Nat., vol. LV, 3, 1941, p. 52.